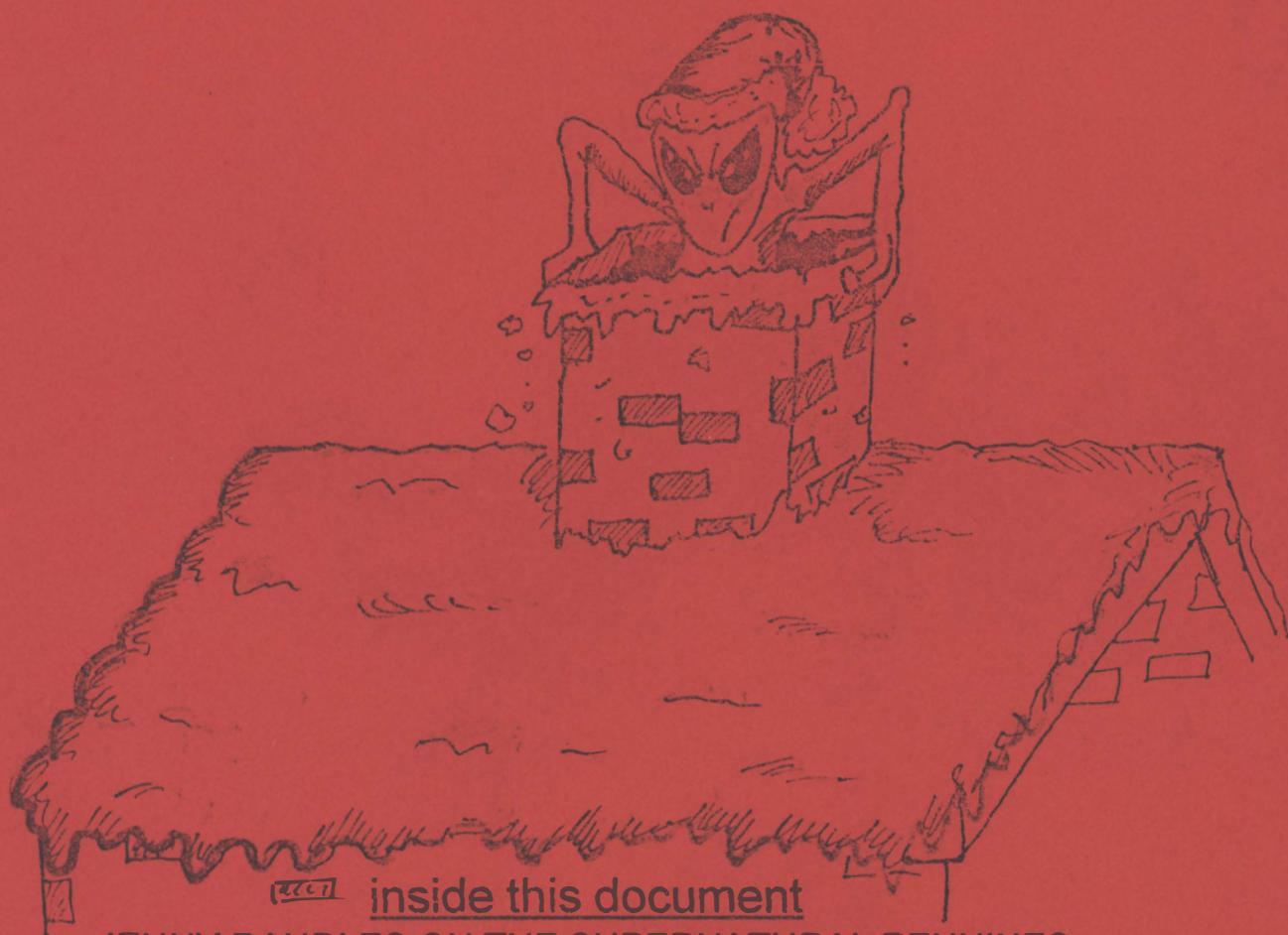


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YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY

PROJECT RED BOOK

(Vol 6, # 4, NOV/DEC 2002)



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"Nobody tosses a Dwarf!"

YET ANOTHER INTERVIEW WITH JENNY RANGLES

Jenny Randles has been involved in UFO and paranormal research for over thirty years and is recognised as one of the world's leading authorities. She is a respected and prolific author of over 50 books, which have been printed in 27 countries around the world. She has made countless appearances on TV and radio around the globe and was the consultant to ITV's *Strange-But True?* series. She has been instrumental in eliciting sweeping changes in the UFO movement, and has even briefed MPs in Parliament on the subject of UFOs. She is presently one of the editorial consultants to the much-respected *International UFO Reporter* a founder of the UFO Investigation Network (UFOIN) and she is the editor of her very own *Northern UFO News*.

Her books include *Something in The Air*, *From Out of the Blue*, *The Complete Book of UFOS* (with Peter Hough) *Alien Contact- the First Fifty Years* and *Time Storms*. Recently, Jenny took time out to talk to PRB about her latest book, an investigation into one of the UK's most famous "window areas", *Supernatural Pennines*.

DAVE BAKER: Jenny, how did your latest book, *Supernatural Pennines* come about?

JENNY RANGLES: I was born and raised in the Pennines, in a small place called Stacksteads just outside Bacup and close to the Lancashire - Yorkshire border. Bacup is where the BBC TV police series *Juliet Bravo* was filmed. Even now I regard this area as my spiritual home and have relatives there. I always love the chance to return.

I left there to move to a small terraced house in the city because my father worked in Manchester and commuting was difficult by steam train in the 1950s (its as difficult today - but at least the steam trains are back as far as Rawtenstall!) Leaving was a real wrench at a young age, but I spent a lot of time in the school holidays walking the hills when staying at my grandparents.

By now the area's association with UFOs was becoming familiar to me. Indeed in the mid 60s there was a sighting over Bacup police station (the same one used in that TV series as the fictional 'Hartley'). So this clearly was a factor in why I got so curious about these matters.

I also recall an encounter with a thunderbolt, as my grannie called it, that damaged a rooftop only yards from where she lived (and I was then staying). At 13 I was in awe of the semi mystical interpretations being placed on the event by locals (there was a rectory next door and fire and brimstone figured in them). But as I grew to become deeply interested in science I

was increasingly intrigued by trying to figure out what such things 'really' meant.

This incident was almost certainly a ball lightning episode and, ironically, it is the first of two times I have narrowly missed seeing such a phenomenon first hand. The second was in 1977 when one actually formed over the rooftop of my house and my mother and a neighbour were witnesses. I was away for a few days with my boyfriend, but did a thorough investigation on return and there is little doubt that is what it was.

All of these things focused my mind on the way in which odd events were occurring in the Pennines with significant frequency, alongside a few small scale experiences of my own. So I always paid especial interest to the sightings being reported from here and there were plenty of those.

This eventually led to the writing of *The Pennine UFO Mystery*, published in 1983. It is one of my favourite books, even though I received peanuts for the year or so working on it. It earned little money and this was then split with a couple of witnesses (and a non witness who shall remain nameless). But I would gladly have written it for nothing anyway as it set out some of the activity that seemed to suggest that the Pennines were unique. It was a labour of love.

The book only ever had one single UK paperback printing and is the book I get asked most about by readers wanting to know if I have any copies to sell them (sadly I never have had and its been out of print since about 1984). So I have always wished for the

opportunity to do something like it again and Robert Hale offered that chance when they started a new series of local studies about the supernatural in the UK in the late 90s.

They had already commissioned David Clarke to write *Supernatural Peak District* and *Supernatural Pennines* was a natural successor. Because the series is not specifically about UFOs it has a much broader remit than *The Pennine UFO Mystery* but it gave me the chance to return to the question of window areas and explore whether the Pennines really qualifies for this description. I did not just want to rewrite *Pennine UFO Mystery* and applying this different angle provided the new focus. Also the chance to do some calculations and offer statistics for those (many) critics who say that the Pennines is nothing special. I have just made it look that way because of my personal interest in it. I wanted to show why I disagree with that opinion.

For our readers outside the North of England, can you give us a quick geography lesson to show the area the Pennines encompass?

Known as the 'backbone of England' the Pennines is a chain of hills with wide open moorland at their heart that runs roughly north to south for 100 miles from the north of Yorkshire down through Lancashire, Derbyshire and petering out in the north midlands around Staffordshire. They split the country into two, dividing old rival communities like the white rose and the red rose (Yorkshire and Lancashire). They comprise mostly mill villages and close knit small communities separated by wild moors.

You get a good flavour of their character as I knew it when I was growing up there from one of my favourite movies, *Whistle Down the Wind*, in which a young Hayley Mills finds a man in her barn who is assumed to be Jesus when in fact he is something rather less than that. This was filmed around the area where I lived in the 1950s and is much as I recall it. The movie was recently rewritten as a stage musical by some guy called Andrew Lloyd Weber who decided to relocate it to the USA for better ratings. He went down a lot in my estimation for such heinous treachery.

Although much of the Pennines is populated more by sheep than people the central area of highest UFO activity is closely hemmed in by three of the UKs biggest cities (Manchester,

Leeds and Sheffield) - making this one of the easiest window areas to be explored and giving plenty of media outlets to report the activity. Undoubtedly a factor in its prominence, of course.

For their size, how do they compare with other areas in the country, or even the world, for paranormal encounters?

I do not think there is any other region of the UK that has the same sustained level of activity, particularly in the densest hot spot (the Rossendale/Calder Valley/Wharfedale region). A huge proportion of the close encounters (and alien contact) cases reported within England have occurred within this region and LITS activity is widespread.

I doubt that similar statistical analyses to the one that I do for *Supernatural Pennines* have ever been carried out in other high activity areas of the world, so it is unwise to claim with certainty that the Pennines is 'the' most active. But I think it may well be the most active in Europe and would give anywhere else a run for its money.

Some alleged windows, such as Bonnybridge in Scotland (which I saw described in a British TV magazine the other day as being the major sighting location in the UK) are what I call socially generated windows. They owe their prominence to a localised flap of sightings in recent years that was intensively promoted and superbly well exploited by the media. Gulf Breeze in Florida is another example.

As a result of this hugely promoted flap more people are encouraged to report sightings there who ordinarily would have remained silent. For we only ever hear about a small fraction of the UFO activity that occurs in any area. So Bonnybridge has an elevated level of sighting 'reports' as opposed to, necessarily, more intrinsic sightings activity. This is mostly, I believe, as a result of it being given this special status. There is no obvious historical track record of this same high level of strange activity that has yet been identified. But it is possible that it might be found if proper searches are made.

Not so the Pennines. Despite the fact that it is probably only really ever discussed as a window area by the UFO community and it certainly has never been hyped all over the world as special like Bonnybridge there is a

long term level of activity consistent with it being in some way a focus of something interesting.

This, by the way, is in no sense to denigrate Bonnybridge. I have been quite daftly accused of possessing nationalist attitudes by shooting down a Scottish window whilst playing up an English one. Nothing could be further from the truth. Bonnybridge is just a different kind of window and national location is irrelevant. It's just what the facts dictate. Of course, coming from the Pennines has been a factor in my long term interest and surely in my recognition of what this area is. But if the evidence was not there this would count for nothing. I have no desire to term anywhere as being a window out of some kind of local pride.

What matters to me is identifying these locations on a global level, recognising the forces that cause them to occur and, hopefully, learning something useful about UFOs as a consequence.

The interesting thing is that, unlike many locations that appear to be hotspots for one particular phenomenon (York - ghosts, Bonnybridge- UFOs), the Pennines appear to have it all, and in spades....

I agree, that is probably the most significant thing that fascinated me in researching *Supernatural Pennines* as opposed to the *Pennine UFO Mystery* 20 years ago. From what I think I know about window areas now I would have been surprised to discover otherwise. But it was an important realisation that the evidence supports that view.

To me a window focuses energy and this energy manifests in a variety of ways. The lights in the sky perceived as UFOs are just one example but it would have been unexpected if this was the only form. A lot of the other phenomena that have made the Pennines special through the centuries seem to be differing outlets for this same energy - strange humming noises, poltergeist effects, misty vaporous apparitions and so on.

My bet is that they are all culturally topical or personally relevant ways for a witness and society to experience the energy that drives a window area and that UFOs and aliens are merely the space age equivalent.

Reading into the myths and legends and folklore of the area, it becomes strikingly clear that unusual phenomena has been an aspect of the Pennines for hundreds of years...

Indeed, so, and that is why I am so confident in saying that this is a window as opposed to something my own predisposition has made me invent. In many respects these myths reflect how a pre scientific culture would respond to odd events that occur within their midst. They need some sort of label to pin onto them - something that helps them get a handle on why these things are going on. Today we may seek scientific resolutions (maybe the quest for earth energies and the like are merely technological mythmaking!) or we may seek to ascribe the events to the modern equivalent of the devil and his demons (ET and a horde of abducting greys). But there are sufficient parallels to suggest there is a continuity here.

The cause of these phenomena - whatever that is - remains across the ages. What changes is how we as a society choose to perceive and to interpret the things that take place.

I am particularly interested in place names; there are numerous references, for example, to witches, devils, and wyrms...can you give us some examples and the legend associated with them?

The Pennines is filled with places named because they had an association with the supernatural. So the local's might, for instance, call somewhere Hob Tor (a Derbyshire Mountain) named after the old name for a demonic entity (as in hob goblin). Sometimes the appearance of supernatural entities is evident from the naming - such as Fairy Springs, in Yorkshire, where there was a belief that nature spirits might be seen. Other times you see a more precise legend associated. In north Manchester claims of a demonic being here have led to the region which today is a large park being called Boggart Hole Clough (boggart being the Lancashire name for what in Yorkshire is known as a boggard or in popular culture as just the bogey man).

Again, at times, these names develop through time making their origin harder to trace. A hole in the rocks in Derbyshire that began by reference to Elves, had this gradually softened so that this derivation was less evident in the

times when Christian fundamentalists wanted to minimise these old beliefs in supernatural beings. The same forces of skepticism at work today were in the hands of the church two centuries ago!

I do wonder if 500 years from now some curious geographers will seek to fathom out why a local moor near Todmorden has been called 'Aliens Den'. You never know!

Although a place may deserve its name due to the history of unusual phenomena occurring there, do you think there could consequently be a "knock-on effect" and that people experience such phenomena *because* of the name?

The name usually came about because word of mouth association with alleged events many centuries ago caused it to be ascribed. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that real supernatural forces were at work. For instance, many spots which have legendary associations with devil lights (and may reflect that in their names) got them because people disappeared or died there in what appeared in the past to be mysterious circumstances. We might today argue that the deaths were inevitable because of the nature of the terrain (such as hidden sink holes) or natural phenomena such as marsh gas that might lure people to investigate and take them into dangerous regions.

Once a legend sticks then it must allow for almost anything odd that occurs within its midst to become blamed on the evil forces at work. Even when, often enough, they probably are not. The same is bound to happen today. We might, for example, regard every strange light to be seen over Todmorden as evidence of the window in action. But, of course, it is no such thing. Even in a UFO window the majority of strange lights will have conventional explanations and we have to guard against presuming strange answers when simpler ones will do - probably more so in a window than anywhere else.

Can you give an example of some of the phenomena associated with the Pennines, perhaps your "personal favourites", or the ones that you feel are the strongest example of something unusual happening.

I do not like singling out individual cases because all are potentially resolvable. What counts is a plethora of related evidence. For example, the concentration of activity in and around Pendle Hill in north Lancashire is impressive. For it shows in microcosm the effects within the Pennines at work.

This spot is, of course, most famous for its connection with witchcraft several hundred years ago. Locals who saw strange things or were believed to have caused them were called witches and suffered dire consequences, probably out of no more than prejudice and that all too human desire to have someone (or something) to blame.

But if you look at what has been long going on in this location you see that much the same thing is happening now as was happening then. For example, showers of stones falling from the sky. Back then it was obvious to the locals that some witch must be doing it and if somebody could be picked out who was odd enough to fit the bill a scapegoat was easy to ascribe. Perhaps if she was locked up or killed these 'evil' things would cease it was hoped.

Today when they happen (as they for instance in the wonderfully named Foulridge) the modern interpretation is that the cause is poltergeist activity. The house at the centre is regarded as haunted and the forces once blamed on witchcraft is now debated as either the result of a haunting spirit or (if you want to be scientific) some sort of psychic temper tantrum erupting from the unconscious of somebody living there.

Then, dig deeper, and you see that there have been plenty of UFOs seen in this area too - through the ages. Indeed there are two cases, one from a century ago, the other from 1977, that both centre on Pendle Hill and describe what appears to be the same glowing mass in the sky. Back in the days when UFOs did not yet exist the manifestation was reported as a phantom airship and its origin was assumed to be strange but terrestrial. When, decades later, much the same thing occurred, it was, of course, reported in the context of a UFO (ie extraterrestrial) close encounter.

This classic case from Nelson in March 1977 not only featured the hovering mass of lights but numerous physical effects so often associated with Pennine UFOs that they are obviously an important clue. Humming noises, physical pressure from the air, electrostatic charges that cause the skin to tingle and hair to

stand on end and even in this case physical effects on the engine and lighting system of a car. Something that could not have happened in the earlier case even if the physical energy to stop a car was there. Because there were no cars to be stopped.

We now begin to sense that the cause of all these disparate phenomena so variously ascribed might be just one thing - electromagnetic energy originating from some local source. But where and how?

Then we look at other cases from modern times and we discover that witnesses have literally seen energy leaking out of the ground in this area - climbing into the sky like lightning in reverse. Does this suggest that the power source lies underground and that when it filters into the atmosphere it causes all these odd things to happen - visual glows, electrical energy, poltergeist effects and so on?

We cannot be sure but at least we have the basis of a working hypothesis here that begs further investigation.

UFOs

I think these may well be the visual ramifications of this energy. They are most often just lights and witnesses may read more structure into them than is really there. You only have to look at the crucial difference between the best eyewitness accounts of UFOs in the Pennines (eg Todmorden policeman Alan Godfrey and his hovering, spinning top) and the best photographic evidence we have (eg from Carleton Moor showing floating orange blobs). Why such a discrepancy?

Because, I suspect, the blobs are what is 'really' there and the accounts of grandiose craft are how witnesses perceive, interpret and describe them - unintentional subconscious embellishment. I do often wonder what Alan Godfrey would have photographed if he had had a camera. My guess is that it would have been a lot less structured an object than UFOlogy chooses to think. But it would have been no less interesting for that.

Fairy encounters

Who knows? Some were obviously visions - or you might prefer daydreams - because they reflect the popular Christmas tree fairy image of what these beings are supposed to be like.

Fairies in actual lore are rarely tiny and more like goblins or elves (or, indeed, greys!) Are we dealing here with a kind of altered state caused by the energy that allows people to dream about what they think / fear has caused them to feel weird? For if so that would adequately explain why in the past people saw fairies and today they see ET.

Ghosts

These may simply be indoor UFOs! What I mean is that amorphous floating shapes close to ground level tend not to be assumed to be UFOs but to be apparitions. Ghosts are rarely interactive and unquestionably real individuals who are dead. But there are cases where they seem to be replays of past scenes - like projected video images.

The reruns of World War Two bomber flights over the Peak District are an example. I do speculate (and it is little more than that) if the energy that is created within these areas might not be capable of storing a signal that some individuals can tune into and replay - perhaps in their minds eye - thus appearing to witness a ghost from the past.

Even when ghosts of people are seen they often have this tendency to be little but a rerun scene. There's a case in the book from Macclesfield where what looks like an old woman pottering about in her house was viewed. That makes much more sense as a replay of an actual scene somehow recorded from years ago than it does as the old lady returning from heaven to do the hoovering.

After all a video image replayed by your VCR operates in just this way. It records the images onto a magnetic field stored on the tape and the VCR reconstitutes this as an image maybe years after those it records are dead - causing a scene from the past to form on your TV screen. The brain operates through electro-chemical impulses. If a window area has EM fields that are generated by this energy that seems to be manifesting there then it is not too much of a scientific stretch to theorise that some people might be functioning like living VCRs to rerun images from the past that somehow get stored in the ether.

Poltergeists

I think these are most likely to just be different kinds of manifestation of that energy - perhaps

focused through especially sensitive individuals who act a bit like radio masts. Most of the things within poltergeist attacks are small scale and reflect sudden bursts of energy - such as banging noises, movements of the ground etc.

Also common (such as in a Rochdale case in the book) are pools of water forming inside houses. My guess is that they occur as a result of the laws of physics. The energy within the room extracts heat from the air (causing it to feel cold and therefore spooky) and this, in effect, allows vapour to condense as water when it touches objects in the room that are actually warmer. A natural effect that looks extremely supernatural especially when happening inside a supposedly haunted house.

Black dogs

I suspect many of these (otherwise reported as ABCs - alien big cats) are real. Either exotic pets released by silly owners who did not agree that a panther is for life, not just for Christmas, or exaggerated perceptions of wild dogs or wild cats.

Time-slips

Time is a funny thing and quite possibly a human invention. At the basic level of the universe there is no real evidence that time actually exists. Possibly our mind can function in a timeless manner when it is able to get free of the constraints imposed by our own need to order and structure things in a linear manner. When it does so we may for brief moments sense the timelessness of the cosmos and see things out of sequence.

This is more likely to be the reason for things like precognition or synchronicity. Time slips could well just be extreme examples of those 'human VCR' events where a witness is so absorbed into the imagery of the rerun that they feel that they have slipped into the past for a while.

Are there any phenomena that appears to be specific to the Pennines?

I am intrigued by the apparent links between slips on the fault lines in local rocks and outbursts of both LITS and auditory phenomena. I doubt that these are really

localised to the Pennines but conditions may just be optimum for them to be noticed here. Whatever the case they may well be vital keys to understanding what is going on. Especially as they are so obviously amenable to scientific study - the very thing scientists claim not to exist within UFOlogy.

Is there one particular area, which could be said to be the most rich with supernatural activity?

There are pockets of strong activity. The Longendale area is one. Totley, just outside Sheffield, surfaced as another hot spot. But the Todmorden area seems the real focal point. More close encounters have occurred within a 10 mile radius of here than anywhere else I know on the planet.

That teams of UFOlogists and scientists are not already combining forces to try to work out why this area is so active is the biggest tragedy of modern UFOlogy - but also utterly expected given UFOlogy's obsession with proving the unproveable (and improbable) such as alien invasions and government cover ups.

It is like discovering an untapped gold mine on your doorstep and then spending 50 years covering up its existence whilst you seek to prove that gold is really molten uranium being stockpiled by Saddam Hussein in an attempt to destroy the world.

In my view UFOlogy should stop playing games and start the real research - which means carefully plotted joint efforts with scientists that use modern technology to seek out and objectively record hard evidence for the energy phenomena at the heart of these reports.

Easily the best place to start would be the Pennines but I am not expecting UFOlogy to show any interest in getting off their collective backsides to do this.

Why? Because seeking out mythical aliens and getting paid \$100,000 to accuse the US of a massive conspiracy is a darned sight more rewarding than sitting on a hill for six months hoping to record physical evidence of a misty light.

One approach to the doing of UFOlogy is science. The other is not. Sadly in today's world only one of these ways will net you

fame, fortune and celebrity status. So is it any wonder which path we tend to follow?

One case which is a classic of ufology, and which happened in the Pennines is the Philip Spencer case. Although it has appeared in numerous places before, you have never discussed it in PRB. Could you tell us about the case, and what you think of it today?

Briefly (for it is a long and complex case) I received a letter from a man who said he was an ex police officer from West Yorkshire. He had found my address from a library and wanted to tell me about something strange that had occurred as he walked Ilkley Moor at dawn a couple of days earlier. He had seen a strange goblin like creature, plus a landed UFO, succeeded in using his camera to snap a shot of the goblin but had no images of the UFO either on the ground or as it took off.

Naturally this claim was startling. A man who had photographed an alien is not something you hear every day - even in Yorkshire. I showed the letter to my colleague Peter Hough and I tried to follow it up. I replied (but only a box address was supplied). I made enquiries and discovered this man (who had given me his real name) had moved out of the town on the day he sent me the letter. But at least I established that he was real. All I could do was hope that he might reply to my letter. But he didn't. I began to think that my reply had been too cautious, since I had made clear what steps were needed to establish the authenticity of the claim.

This was early December and in January I discovered via Peter that the witness had decided not to reply to me but instead had contacted Arthur Tomlinson and the Lancashire group DIGAP. Now I liked Arthur but with the best will in the world I could not describe him as scientifically orientated. Arthur, for instance, was well known to have had phone conversations with what he believed was an alien.

I found it odd and continue to this day to find it odd that the witness ignored my letter and went to Arthur instead. He claims that this was because he lost patience waiting to hear from me but I replied immediately (which he accepts) via the oblique contact address that was all he gave me (which he also admits)

allowing no other means of communication with him (which he also accepts).

I have always wondered if anything less than total acceptance of his story was not wanted so he needed instead contact with some group willing to take it at face value.

That is pure surmise on my part and I do not think Peter Hough agrees with me, but I cannot shake my sense that something is not right about how this first contact developed. From day one it caused me (possibly unfairly) to wonder if this whole thing was a set up - perhaps someone's attempt to test the response of the UFO community to a weird story and, if so, it just seemed a better bet to do that via someone who might not ask too many questions.

But I could be completely wrong.

Arthur had met the witness after he gave him a proper (non box number) contact and told Peter (as they lived quite close to one another). Of course, Peter had recognised the case as being the one that I had shown to him a few weeks earlier and for which I still awaited any reply from the witness. Arthur had been happy to get the story from the witness, take a copy of the photo and was really not unduly bothered about taking it too much further. Peter and I were unwilling to leave it at that.

Peter had befriended the witness (to this day they are still in contact and the man totally stands by his original story). So much so that he gave Peter copyright in the photo - supposedly to let him do any tests necessary without having to involve the witness. He was flat out unwilling to give any media interviews or to cooperate with Peter in the writing of a book (something I know that Peter later tried to do). He would talk to us (I met him just the once and he never shied away from questions then or in phone conversations with him). Peter, who soon took the case on as a bit of a personal crusade, has met him more often.

I have to say that, again, I was perplexed as to how anyone who had taken such a photo that (if real) is clearly of massive value and global importance could be so disinterested in retaining any control over it or desirous of any remuneration. Potentially, after all, it was worth thousands. On the one hand, you might say, this shows that this was not a hoax created for any sort of reward involving fame and fortune. On the other hand I had trouble regarding it as a credible human response.

Would not even the least mercenary of minds realise that a photo of an alien that you absolutely knew was real could set you, your wife and kids up for life? To just hand that over to a stranger to do with as he wished never struck me as making any sense.

Peter and I spent a couple of weeks pursuing the case together (and Arthur had some initial involvement). Together we had the photograph analysed by a number of sources (including Kodak and a photo lab at a firm where my brother worked). We also visited a wild life photographic expert in Sheffield to try to get some take on whether this image of a little green goblin displayed signs of animation or was obviously a model.

All the tests agreed that this was a real photo of something. But it was impossible to know whether that was a 4 foot tall dummy, or a child in a suit, or indeed an alien. We had, of course, obtained all the film on the reel - not just the alien shot - and this matched the witness story (showing scenes consistent with his previous account of what he had done before and after the sighting). In other words we had no evidence that the photo was a hoax. But no proof that what was on it really was an alien.

Peter also went off and got tests conducted into other alleged physical evidence (the witness was carrying a compass and said that it reversed polarity during the encounter). These only revealed that were ways to reverse the polarity of a compass (eg stick it in a magnetic resonance scanner!). But not if that had happened here or the UFO had been responsible as the witness claimed.

We also got Andy Roberts to check out the site one year after the photo was taken to see if it was consistent with the story (viz a viz lighting etc). He found a reflective mark on the rock that could have been the one on the photo. The witness story referred to a white box on top of the UFO that looked very like the mark in the photo. But Andy had now discovered this to be of natural origin.

I should emphasise that I never heard the witness ever connect the white box he had claimed to see on the UFO with the mark on his photo. It was an inference that investigators made.

That said there were various aspects to the case that have caused me some diquiet over the years. The photo clearly was not taken at the

time of day the witness first reported (we found that out very quickly). He reported missing time, perhaps a factor in this problem, and Peter arranged for him to be regressed by a doctor in Preston. I was not present but did hear the tape afterwards. I have to say that from my own experience of regression (both personally and via presence at numerous sessions with abductees) I was not persuaded that this man was truly regressed. He gave a very matter of fact account which sounds like many an abduction scenario. In the process he said that the photo was taken at the end of the abduction (not the start) thus explaining why the sky was lighter than it otherwise could have been.

Although I was unpersuaded of this the clinical psychologist did say he was sure that the witness was truly regressed. As far as I know he had not been involved in a UFO case before.

I had another spell of contact with the witness when Peter was temporarily unavailable and left me to deal with him. The witness was scared that his story would reach the media (it did - some months later - thanks to an unscrupulous person). I assured him that Peter and I would not go public without his support and would never reveal his real name (which we never have). But he claimed to have been contacted by a big tabloid seeking to expose him. I made immediate discrete enquiries and found no evidence that this was true. But for obvious reasons could not be too explicit with my contacts when checking.

Overall I again was left with some doubts about this part of the story.

The witness also later alleged to be visited by two military officers - men in black style - and his wife (I thought a little hesitantly at first) backed up this claim. But Peter was unable to find any hard evidence for the visit.

So what do we make of this story today? I don't know. As explained I have niggling doubts that give rise to caution. On the other hand the witness has never been anything other than cooperative, answered any questions I fired at him and is a good actor if he is not being truthful. Similarly his motive for any hoax would presumably be to fool UFOlogy (maybe as a joke or some sort of experiment) and continue to do so for many years. That is always possible, but how do you prove that and why keep the act up for so long?

As noted all the physical evidence including the photo holds up in so far as it can do but none of it proves anything as regards the alien nature of this event. It all could have been set up, So you have a case that inherently you just have to be suspicious about (after all it was a picture of a little green man!) But for which the only evidence for anything suspicious is circumstantial. I have always been fascinated because this case challenges all of my preconceptions. It should not be possible for this photo to be real. But I have not been able to prove that it is unreal. Although I certainly would not base my views of the universe upon its reality.

What next? I am suggesting *Supernatural The Hilton at Waikiki Beach, Hawaii* - but so far my publishers are unconvinced.

Until recently, you lived in the Pennines. Did you ever experience anything unusual yourself?

Lots of odd lights and a particularly interesting optical mirage caused by a temperature inversion distorting a star. That was seen over a lake in Weir, Lancashire. But nothing of sufficient power that would persuade me to alter my worldview.

Dave Clarke's *Supernatural Peak District*, and your own *Supernatural Pennines*...Which paranormal hotspot can we expect to explore next?

The Robert Hale *Supernatural* *** series is continuing. I believe *Supernatural Lancashire* is coming next (but I am not the author so I am not sure when that is due). There may well be others commissioned by now.

I am currently writing *Supernatural Isle of Man* due sometime in 2003. For this I have spent some time on the island (one I have visited often since first doing so at the age of 5).

It is a wonderfully rich culture steeped in Celtic folklore and my book is going to be a little different from the Pennines one. It will be more of a travellers guide. But it will also look much more closely at the folklore and how this might interact with today's strange phenomena. I hope it will encourage those interested in the supernatural to take the ferry to this magical island. I have learned some fascinating new things whilst researching the book and I hope to convey some of these discoveries.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 14 January 2003

7:00pm-10:00pm

THE OLD QUEEN'S HEAD

POND STREET

SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE

FROM AROUND THE WORLD... AND BEYOND!!!

UFOs, conspiracies, fortune and paranormal events compiled by Dave Baker

LOCH NESS MONSTER 'GOES AWOL'

(Ananova 10th November 2002)

The Loch Ness Monster has gone AWOL, according to the beast's fan club.

The Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club says there have been only three reported sightings of Nessie this year.

The club's Nessie Sightings Register reveals that nobody has claimed to have seen the monster since August. Gary Campbell, President of the Fan Club says: "There has been an unusually low number of sightings reported this year, all of which were made by local people. It appears that no tourists visiting the area have seen anything strange at all whilst at the loch."

Historically, Nessie sightings peak during the tourist season. Mr Campbell adds: "This would be expected, and not just for the cynics' reason that locals are trying to boost tourist number. There are longer daylight hours during the summer and of course more people about."

None of this year's 'witnesses' were carrying cameras.

Anyone who has any evidence of the continued existence of Nessie might find it worth their while coming forward.

The William Hill award for the best Nessie sighting of the year is this year worth £1000 to the winner.

CLINTON'S AIDE SLAMS UFO SECRECY

(Richard Stenger CNN, Tuesday, October 22, 2002)

(CNN) -- One winter night in 1965, eyewitnesses saw a fireball streak over North America, bank, turn and appear to crash in western Pennsylvania. Then swarms of military personnel combed the area and a tarp-covered flatbed truck rumbled out of the woods.

Now a former White House chief of staff and an international investigative journalist want to know what the Pentagon knows, calling on it to release classified files about that and other incidents involving unidentified flying objects, or UFOs.

"It is time for the government to declassify records that are more than 25 years old and to provide scientists with data that will assist in determining the real nature of this phenomenon," ex-Clinton aide John Podesta said Tuesday.

A Pentagon spokesperson could not be reached for comment regarding the requests for information.

Despite earning little credence, cases of strange aerial phenomena that defy explanation abound -- whether witnessed by thousands of Arizona residents, commercial airline pilots or a U.S. president.

The new initiative is not setting out to prove the existence of aliens. Rather the group wants to legitimise the scientific investigation of unexplained aerial phenomena.

Podesta was one of numerous political and media heavyweights on hand in Washington, D.C., to announce a new group to gain access to secret government records about UFOs.

Specifically, the Coalition for Freedom of Information (CFI) is pressing the Air Force for documents involving Project Moon Dust and Operation Blue Fly, clandestine operations reported to have existed decades ago to investigate UFOs and retrieve objects of unknown origins.

One of the most mysterious cases, the Kecksburg, Pennsylvania incident of December 5, 1965, is the first cited in the group's request for records through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Despite an official government story that the object was a meteorite, some eyewitnesses claimed that a military truck took an acorn-

shaped object the size of a small car from the rural Pennsylvania crash site to an Air Force base in Ohio.

"We can't come up with a reason why this information is being withheld. The government won't even acknowledge that the incident took place but we know that it did," said Leslie Kean, a California-based freelance reporter who drafted the FOIA request.

In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, the government did take the UFO search seriously and top generals considered the pros and cons of informing the U.S. public, Kean said, citing top secret memos.

In 1969, however, the Air Force terminated Project Blue Book, concluding that no reported UFOs were threats to national security.

Paradoxically, Kean notes, the military continues to deny some requests for UFO information by citing national security concerns.

Backed by the Sci-Fi channel, the CFI hopes to reduce the scientific ridicule factor in this country when the topic is UFOs.

"There's definitely evidence of strange phenomenon in the world. These are well documented," said Kean, who has written for *The Nation*, the *Boston Globe* and the *International Herald Tribune*.

"Most people don't think that there is evidence because they haven't looked for it. There's such a little green men mindset in this culture. It's hard to work your way through that."

The CFI director Ed Rothschild also works for Podesta's public relations firm, PodestaMattoon, which is coordinating the new group at the behest of the Sci-Fi channel. He said the initiative was a call for serious investigation, not a publicity stunt for the cable network.

"The Sci-Fi channel has had an interest in [UFOs] for some time. The difference here is that they are focusing attention on the serious, factual side of the issue, and that scientists have not had a chance to thoroughly examine it," Rothschild said.

"Of course it could help programming. But Sci-Fi thought they had some resources they could bring to the table."

LOOK! UP IN THE SKY! BIGFOOT HAS SPROUTED WINGS, AND HE'S COMING YOUR WAY.

(Oct. 22)

A bird the size of a small airplane, with a 14-foot wingspan - twice the size of an eagle's - mesmerized several witnesses last week in southwest Alaska, who compared it to a raptor from *Jurassic Park*.

Pilot John Bouker told the Anchorage Daily News he spotted the huge creature in the sky. "The people in the plane saw him," he said.

At first he discounted the sighting, until he saw the huge creature with his own eyes, just 1,000 feet from his plane.

"He's huge," Bouker said. "He's really, really big. You wouldn't want to have your children out."

After another big bird sighting, a heavy equipment operator radioed the nearby town of Togiak, warning residents to protect their children, and causing more than a bit of unrest.

The incident only underscored an important fact: Monster reports are not always a joke. A mysterious 'monkeyman' menaced India last year, biting and robbing 60 people on the outskirts of New Delhi.

In one 10-day period, police received 328 calls about the half-man, half monkey. They dispatched about 1,000 officers and imposed a curfew in one area. After an investigation, officials later declared the entire event was a hoax perpetuated by mass hysteria.

In Alaska, local officials suspect that well-meaning witnesses may have overestimated the bird's size, and say that it may have been a Steller's eagle - a rare, fish-eating bird that's harmless to humans.

Still, it's time to wonder, have we seen the last of Big Bird? Or do Bigfoot, Mothman, and the Loch Ness Monster have a new friend?

ACCIDENT BLACK SPOT BLAMED ON GHOST

Villagers think a ghost could be to blame for a series of accidents on a country road.

Locals believe the ghost of a road accident victim from more than 60 years ago could be

haunting a stretch of the A465 near Bromyard in Herefordshire.

A farmer says as many as 26 drivers have crashed into his fence in the same place over the last 18 months.

Some motorists have reported mysteriously losing control of the steering.

Checks on the cambers, speed checks and improved road markings have all failed to stop the crashes.

County councillor Richard James says some motorists who lost control of their vehicles reported the sensation of having their steering wheels pulled from their hands.

And a meeting in a country pub added to his suspicion that the supernatural could be to blame for the crashes.

Mr James was in the Crown and Sceptre in Bromyard when a man he had never seen before approached him saying "Don't worry, no-one will die there".

The mystery man, who claimed to be a psychic, told Mr James a woman had died on the road in the 1920s or '30s after a struggle over the steering wheel.

Mr James says he had not previously discussed the crashes with anybody: "It was a strange conversation and it really freaked me out."

Neil Redding from Hereford lost control of his car on the road and crashed through the fence in July 2002.

"The wheels wouldn't react for a second or so. I don't know what it was as I wasn't going fast by any means - 99% of the time it would never have happened.

"I couldn't believe it. The farmer turned up and said 'not another one!' I wouldn't say it was anything weird though."

The parish council in Stoke Lacy is now seeking the assistance of Reverend Keith Crouch.

The clerk Carole Surman, who called in Mr Crouch, is keeping an open mind.

"I can't understand it. There are no skid marks... people roll their cars but no one ever gets hurt and it's always in exactly the same

place. Until we know what's causing these accidents we can't stop them from happening," she said.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT CAUGHT ON TAPE; FBI HELP SOUGHT

(Cathy Woodruff, *The Times Union*, October 22, 2002)

Was it a terrorist missile, an off-course alien spacecraft or just a zippy mosquito with a hearty autumn constitution? Local authorities hope the FBI will know for sure.

The image caught on videotape by a Fox 23 cameraman shooting background for weather stories on Sunday resembles -- when it's slowed, enlarged and paused -- a fine rod with a small set of wings near each end.

The cameraman didn't notice it at the time, said Fox assignment editor Jeb Rowledge, but the tiny dark spot streaking across the frame, apparently above the clouds, caught his eye while editing the video of a plane taking off at Albany International Airport.

The station showed the video to airport and Albany County Sheriff's officials Sunday night, and on Monday, local authorities asked the FBI to take a look, too.

"There's something on that videotape that is interesting, to say the least, but we don't have any idea what it is," said airport spokesman Doug Myers.

"Right now, we don't know what it is or if it was there," said Undersheriff John Mahan. "It looks like a rocket," but it did not show up on airport radar, and even the cameraman didn't see it until he looked at the tape.

Albany FBI spokeswoman Lisa Massaroni said the tape will likely be sent to FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., for analysis.

"Nothing has been determined about what, if anything, is on that video," she said. The image resembles phenomena called "rods," which some buffs suggest could be paranormal or extraterrestrial.

Skeptics, however, say they are simply the result of an insect flying past a video camera at a certain speed and distance. They contend the figure is formed because bug wings beat at a different frequency from the frame capture rate of a video camera, creating a strange image

resembling a rod, the blurred body of the insect moving forward, and small bulges along each side.

BIG CATS ARE BREEDING, SAY RESEARCHERS

(Ananova 21st October 2002)

Researchers say big cats are breeding in the Welsh countryside.

The study has been done by academics at the University of Wales in Swansea.

The university's Professor Alayne Street-Perrott has told the *Western Mail* she's convinced big cats are living in the Welsh countryside.

Her horse was attacked by what is believed to have been a puma four years ago.

Prof Street-Perrott's team has discovered more than 70 big cat encounters in South Wales alone since last October, and they believe this is probably the tip of the iceberg.

They also have evidence of paw prints and photos of livestock across South Wales, which they say have all the hallmarks of a big cat attack.

"The most convincing evidence is the attack on our horse," she said. "I've taken photos to America and shown them to puma experts and they agree that the only thing that could have been responsible for something like that and created a bite mark like that on a horse's neck is a puma or lynx.

"We also have evidence of sheep that have been killed, which it is difficult to say could have been killed in any other way."

APE-LIKE CREATURE SIGHTED CROSSING ARIZONA HIGHWAY

(Mohave Daily News, Bullhead City / AZ - Oct 21.02)

Bigfoot field investigators were in Bullhead City Monday to research a report that one of the ape-like creatures was allegedly sighted crossing Highway 95 last week.

"We are not fanatics that wear aluminum hats or anything like that," said Brad Mortenson, an investigator for Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization.

According to the organization's Web site, www.BFRO.net, there have been 14 reported sightings (not including the Bullhead area sighting) in Arizona.

"In this area this would be the first sighting we are aware of," Mortenson said.

Mortenson and his cousin Will Wicklund have been chasing sasquatch creatures since the '70's.

Mortenson said he is a professional wilderness guide and tracker.

In 1997, after a sighting near Rice Lake, Wisconsin, he located three prints purportedly to be of the legendary creature.

He said late last week the organization received a report on its website that people in a dozen or so cars saw a bigfoot-like creature cross the highway, coming up from the Colorado River.

The report said two cars turned off the highway to shine their lights on it. Mortenson and Wicklund were notified by BFRO but do not have a contact name.

Monday, the investigators checked with the Bullhead City Police Department to see if any reports were made. The police department had no record of any bigfoot sightings.

Mortenson suspects it may be up near Katherine mines. Wicklund suspects the lower valley where there is more vegetation.

"We are hoping to have a good jumping off spot for any evidence that is left, be it footprints, hair samples or faeces. Fortunately, unless it rains here, or there is real strong wind, some tracks in some kinds of dirt are going to stay here awhile. So we have a little bit of time to play with, but, until we get a starting point ..." Wicklund said.

"I would like to find one person who has even heard from a person who has seen it," Mortenson said.

The investigators can be contacted through the BFRO Web site.

A VIEW FROM BRITAIN

THE JENNY RANGLES COLUMN

(Originally published in The MUFON JOURNAL, August 2001)

(Editor's note - Please bear in mind the original date of publication. YUFOS extends its thanks to Jenny & to Dwight Connely, editor of The MUFON Journal, for permission to reproduce this work.)

RESEARCHING UFOS

Research is something that is often overlooked because it is a long and lonely process. It tends to take second place to the drama of case investigation but whilst it may lack the glamour it can be more productive in the long term. Better answers may ultimately emerge this way than by investigating 100 additional lights in the sky.

I thought this month that I would review some of the research projects that are ongoing in the UK. Whilst this is by no means all that is happening over here, these give a flavour of the UFOlogy that is taking place.

Retrospectives

Retrospective investigation is a buzz word in British UFOlogy right now. This depends upon UFOlogists taking an old case and treating it to a massive shakedown whereby every lead conceivable is followed through.

UFOIN, the UFO Investigators Network (a team of British net based researchers working together in a loose union) defined this as an aim when formed two years ago and has been actively chasing a number of famous cases - such as Britain's best known car stop (in Sopley, Hampshire during November 1967 - when a car and a truck were both allegedly halted by a hovering UFO but the diesel engined truck only lost electrical power).

A vast amount of research has gone into this case, uncovering many little known angles and hunting down and interviewing witnesses who seem not to have given their story in the past. Paul Fuller, Andy Roberts and David Clarke have been the mainstays of this case. It is fair to say that what they have found has not strengthened the once highly considered significance of the events.

Much the same sort of thing has been happening with regards to the famous radar-

visual case at Lakenheath in Suffolk in August 1956 - one of the few that really impressed the Condon team and was considered a genuine UFO even by them. This new work began in 1996 when by chance I found some of the crews of British Venom fighters sent up to intercept the radar tracked object. Their story contradicted some of the popular legend - based largely on just the American side of the story - and has led to a long, ongoing and deeply productive re-investigation that has revealed new twists and turns all along the way.

The research into Lakenheath will hopefully be published soon, but has already been put back several times because new things have been uncovered and required further in depth study. All I can say is that this retrospective has uncovered a great deal of new information that leaves all previous summaries of the case trailing. How it will effect peoples judgement of what took place in 1956 remains to be seen, but without doubt we are starting to see the case far more clearly than we have done at any time before thanks to this new retrospective research approach.

Pattern Recognition

Another area in which research is proving popular in the UK is with what we might call pattern recognition. That means taking a large number of cases and seeking clues from within them resulting from patterns spotted in the data.

Some years ago the wonderful British researcher the late Ken Phillips started this program with what he called 'the Anamnesis Project. Working with a European scientist, Dr Alex Keul, a life profile of close encounter witnesses was compiled and many of these could be cross referenced in such a way as that certain consistencies started to appear.

One example, was that the prevalence of migraines found amongst close encounter witnesses. This stood out as a factor that must indicate some connection with the events being

reported. As did their tendency to have life long track records of psychic experiences as well as UFO encounters.

I have done some research on these lines with alien contact / abductee witnesses following on from these pioneer studies. This has revealed further clues such as the extraordinary early life recall of close encounter witnesses - that is often being able to remember events when they were just a few weeks old, whereas most people do not have any memory at all earlier than the age of about 3.

All of these patterns provide important clues that can be back referred to our theories about UFO origin. They must tell us something that either support or do not support each theory - hence the value of research projects such as these.

Another project was started by the late Ron West and is being continued by people like Omar Fowler and Victor Kean. This is to produce a massive data base of sightings of triangular UFOs. These have become by far the most common type of UFO seen in the UK in recent years. This project (known as FT) (Flying Triangle) has started to reveal trends - for instance the apparent focusing of cases around power stations.

How you interpret evidence of this sort is quite another matter but having the evidence to interpret in the first place is really what matters and amply justifies the advantages of doing this work.

Artful moves

Another interesting group of British research projects revolves around art. This ranges from the Bacup UFO team headed by Roger Markham (also working to create a UFO monitor, conference centre and exhibition in this Pennine hill town - known locally as UFO Alley owing to the high level of activity reported there). They are collating examples of UFO related artwork purely on a cultural basis.

Rather more specific is the research being carried out by Gary Anthony who is seeking all known cases of UFOs and aliens that have been seen with symbols on the side of their craft or on their uniforms in some way. The aim is to look for any patterns that might emerge and what this might tell us.

After all if we are being visited by aliens from some other civilisation then presumably they do have some kind of language and perhaps the cosmic equivalent of a Rosetta stone is out there somewhere in the evidence right now. To decode this could unlock many secrets.

Or, of course, this research might reveal that the true origin of these symbols is the human unconscious.

Either way this is information that can only help UFOlogy to progress.

PILOTS SIGHT UFO OVER CHINA

*(The Sydney Morning Herald -
Australia, November 8 2002)*

Several airline pilots have reported sighting a shining unidentified flying object (UFO) near the south-eastern Chinese city of Nanjing, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The first sighting was reported by a Xiamen Airlines pilot on Monday, who said he saw a light blue object hovering past his plane while 80km north of Nanjing, the Wen Wei Po daily reported.

At the same time, pilots of a Shandong Airline aircraft, which was some 120km away from the Xiamen airlines plane, also reported a similar sighting. They described the UFO as being a white-blue skateboard-shaped craft.

A pilot from another airplane, about 300km away, also reported a similar sighting to an airport control tower in Tonglu in Zhejiang province.

In recent years, China has witnessed a surge in UFO sightings.

MOTHPMAN & THE THUNDERBIRD: SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

(A STRIKING RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE "MOTHPMAN" AND AN INDIAN
THUNDERBIRD ARTIFACT)

BY DANIEL V. BOUDILLION

The purpose of this report is to draw attention to similarities between a circa 1600 Indian Thunderbird artefact, and the descriptions of an anomalous and frightening figure seen repeatedly in 1967, dubbed "The Mothman".

MOTHPMAN HISTORY

The Mothman is one of the strangest and most terrifying of anomalous creatures ever to be recorded in America. Between November 12, 1966 and December 15, 1967, it terrorized citizens in the Point Pleasant area of West Virginia. It was said to have been encountered by at least 100 people over the course of that year.

According to author John A. Keel (*The Mothman Prophecies*, 1975) who was on hand investigating the reports during the time of the sightings, the creature was reported to be roughly man-shaped, either grey or brown, and between five and seven feet tall. Its body was wider than a man's. It did not appear to have a head, but rather its "eyes" were set on the upper chest. These "eyes" were very large, and alternately described as glowing red lights, or a reflected red like a bicycle reflector. When it walked it shuffled on what appeared to be human-like legs. Rather than arms it had bat-like wings, which it did not flap. It was always seen to glide. The non-flapping of the wings, even in ascent, is particularly disturbing. Indeed, it was reported to regularly ascend straight up like a helicopter - and again be it noted, without any wing-action. In flight it emitted a humming sound. Occasionally it was heard to emit a screeching sound something like a woman screaming. (This "woman screaming" sound is common among anomalous creatures, particularly the Bigfoot creatures.)

Recently, interest in Mothman has been rekindled due to the release of the movie *The Mothman Prophecies* starring Richard Gere. Cryptozoologist Loren Colman has also contributed a new book on the subject: *Mothman & Other Curious Encounters* (2002). For comprehensive accounts of the

Point Pleasant/Mothman events, please refer to links such as: prairieghosts.com, and mothmanlives.com.

THUNDERBIRD ARTIFACT

On June 15, 2002 I was visiting the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard Massachusetts. While in the Indian Museum, I noticed an artefact that bore a startling resemblance to Mothman descriptions. This artefact is ten inches tall and made of copper sheet. It was recovered in Amoskeag Falls, Manchester, New Hampshire, and was probably fashioned from a copper kettle acquired through trade with Europeans during the early Contact Period, circa 1550-1630 A.D. It is attributed to the Pennacook Indians and labeled "Thunderbird".

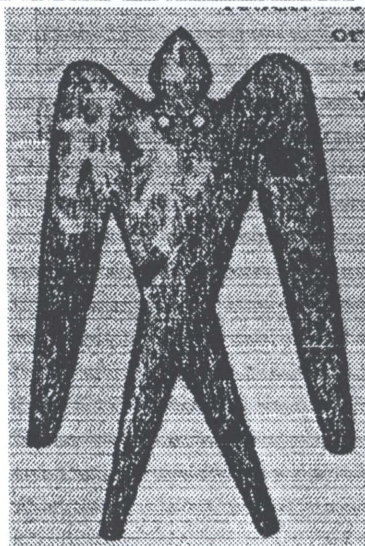
The main difference between the Mothman descriptions and the Thunderbird artefact is that the artefact is crafted with a head, while the Mothman is typically described as having no head. The general body shape - other than the head discrepancy - is identical. The most striking similarity is the "eye" placement. The Thunderbird artefact has two holes placed on the upper chest, same as Mothman descriptions. Presently, these "eyes" on the Thunderbird artefact are being used as string holes to lace the figure to a museum stand. I enquired of the Museum Staff if the holes were meant as "eyes", or were merely lacing holes.

They did not know, but gave their opinion that as "eyes", they were very compelling. I also asked if the holes were part of the original creation or were added later as lacing holes, but the staff was unable to provide information on this. In fact, the Fruitlands item is a reproduction - the original is in the collection of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, catalogue number 88-45-10/46959.

COMPARISON

Loren Coleman, in his recent book *Mothman & Other Curious Encounters*, created a composite sketch of the Mothman based on the various reports and eyewitness testimony.

Please see Loren's composite sketch, below. Below that is a scan of the Thunderbird artefact from the book *The New England Indians* by C. Keith Wilbur.



THUNDERBIRD LORE:

Although primarily associated with the Plains Indians, the Thunderbird was known to the Algonquin speaking peoples of New England. However, like most Native American culture in New England, little is now known of their beliefs.

In regards to the Thunderbird, this much is known: it was a fearsome being and resembled a winged man, it caused fear and dread, and

was said to actually kill humans from time to time. (Jim Brandon - *The Rebirth Of Pan*)

ASSESSMENT

There is a startling visual resemblance between the Mothman descriptions and the Thunderbird artefact. The single difference is the head - Thunderbird has one, Mothman doesn't. If the holes in the Thunderbird figure were intended as eyes, the identical placement of the eyes is a significant feature. With the exception of the head, the Thunderbird is a figure that exactly reproduces the Mothman descriptions.

A second resemblance is its perceived disposition: the citizens of Point Pleasant felt terrorized by the Mothman - the Thunderbird was a figure of dread and fear in the culture of the Pennacook craftsman who created the copper figure.

CONCLUSIONS

The question is not whether there is or is not a strange "Mothman" creature that troubled folks in West Virginia, or whether there really is or was a Thunderbird being that the Pennacook of New Hampshire and other Algonquin speaking tribes of New England feared - the point is that both cultures have legend of it, and the images of this creature - with the exception of the head motif in this instance - are identical.

If there are strange anomalous beings, perhaps they are definable by type - much in the way the reports of lake monsters and Bigfoot are recognizable "types". If so, whatever produces these phenomena appears to be consistent in its types. I find it curious that two cultures separated by 400 years, 750 miles, and dissimilar cultures have recorded a particular "type" in almost exact detail.

I would say that there are grounds for suggesting that the good folks at Point Pleasant and the fine Pennacook of sixteenth century New Hampshire were reporting images of the same being - whatever that being may really be.

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UFOs: SUB ROSA* DOWN UNDER THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY & GOVERNMENT ROLE IN THE UFO CONTROVERSY

BY BILL CHALKER
(Copyright © B. Chalker - 1996)

The author is a leading Australian UFO researcher and a contributing editor to the *International UFO Reporter*. An industrial chemist with an honours science degree from the University of New England he has worked in quality assurance and laboratory management. His book, *The OZ Files - the Australian UFO Story*, was published in 1996. He coordinates the NSW based UFO Investigation Centre (UFOIC).

Bill has allowed his work to be published in *Project Red Book* on numerous occasions, and it is now my pleasure to begin a major series on Bill's research into the secret investigations of the Australian government and military of UFOs. This first instalment serves as an introduction to the mammoth work.

* **Sub Rosa**: refers to "under the rose", meaning "in secret".

ACCESS TO THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN UFO FILES

Prior to 1982 civilian UFO researchers only had a confused and vague picture of clandestine official involvement in Australia. In the face of the lethargy in the RAAF's replies to serious enquiries, I stepped up my efforts at diplomatically trying to get direct access to the RAAF UFO files. It probably surprised me more than anybody else when the RAAF finally agreed to permit me to examine their files.

The extent of access was unprecedented in the history of the Australian UFO controversy. From the first of my visits to the Russell Offices of the Department of Defence, in Canberra, on January 11th, 1982 to my last in June, 1984, I was able to scrutinise the extent of official UFO investigations in Australia. For the first time a detailed "inside" picture was revealed of RAAF investigations.

I was able to undertake the first officially sanctioned direct review of the Australian government's UFO files. Over two and a half years I was able to:

(1) examine the majority of the extant UFO files held by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) at the Directorate of Air Force

Intelligence (DAFI), Department of Defence, Russell Offices, Canberra

(2) examine the entirety of the extant UFO files held by the Department of Aviation at their Bureau of Air Safety Investigation in Melbourne, Victoria.

The review has provided a detailed understanding of official involvement in Australia.

ACCESS TO THE RAAF UFO FILES

On Monday morning, January 11th, 1982, I arrived at the Russell Offices of the Department of Defence, in Canberra, to undertake a review of the RAAF/Department of Defence UFO files. This was the first time that a civilian researcher had been afforded this sort of access.

For almost thirty years, the RAAF had been the official body invested with the responsibility of investigating reports of UFOs or unusual aerial sighting (UAS) reports in Australia and its territories. Until then no clear and unambiguous picture had emerged about the role the RAAF played in the UFO controversy in Australia. Two polarised

positions had emerged. The RAAF was covering up its high level involvement in an international "cover-up" of UFO facts, perhaps in concert with the US Air Force. Or, the RAAF was bureaucratically locked into a responsibility it had long since decided was a waste of time, but continued as a service to the general public.

The only public record of case investigations by the RAAF had been the "summaries of Unusual Aerial Sightings". These consisted of date, time, location, very brief details of the event and "possible cause". Nine of these were produced, covering the years between 1960 and 1977. The 1977 Summary was the last publicly available summary. In 1980 the Department of Defence indicated, "the practice of compiling annual summaries of UAS reports was discontinued in 1978. This was in line with the Department of Defence policy of the RAAF now investigating reports purely as a 'service to the general public'..."

After signing in at the police desk, I was escorted to Building C of the Russell Offices Defence complex. I was shown to a desk. During that day and for the next 3, I conducted an exhaustive examination of the RAAF UFO files. I determined that I was looking at about a third of the holdings of RAAF files on UFOs. Subsequent investigation research and pursuing the paper trail enabled me to examine a continuity of files that covered the period from 1950 to 1984.

From the RAAF's point of view, they have been, as Australia's "official governmental examiner" of UFO reports, locked into a bureaucratically orchestrated responsibility, which for a long time they have seen as a waste of their time. They may have allayed possible fear and alarm by the general public and satisfied the government that there is no apparent defence implication. However, the RAAF appear to be as confused and uncertain as many civilian groups, on what to do about provocative UFO sightings. The RAAF largely solved that dilemma by ignoring the implications of their "unknown" cases and providing, what many saw as unlikely explanations for intractable reports.

"UNKNOWN" & "IMPOSSIBILITIES"

The term "unknown", in RAAF parlance, was a moveable feast. In 1973 I was advised it meant a classification that could arise from three different categories, namely:

- a. Insufficient information provided to adequately evaluate the sightings;
- b. Late submission of reports thus precluding adequate investigation; and
- c. Thorough investigation of a detailed report resulting in no factual determination of the cause.

Approximately 1% of all sighting reports submitted to the R.A.A.F. are nonattributable as per sub para c. above, and in future, cause details in the summaries will be more explicit."

By 1980 I was being advised: The term "unknown" is used to denote the small percentage of UAS reports that remain unresolved because of insufficient information being supplied, late receipt of report denying timely investigation, remoteness of sighting location, and insufficient current scientific knowledge being available to provide an explanation...

It was not only the "unknowns" that drew scrutiny and debate. Many reports had attracted unlikely explanations from the RAAF. For example "tornado-like meteorological phenomena" was suggested for some of the most striking cases, such as close encounters at Willow Grove (1963), Vaucluse Beach (1965) and Tully (1966). "Plasma" was a popular explanation around 1967 since it was an explanation being unrealistically pushed in America at the time. It was provided as an explanation in a striking close encounter near Burrenjack Dam in 1967. It seemed evident on even the most cursory analysis that such weak explanations showed little scientific enquiry, but a lot of political and military myopia.

THE SOURCE OF THE RAAF "IMPOSSIBILITIES"

The quality of RAAF investigations into both prosaic and significant "unknown" reports has drawn criticism from many sources, perhaps none more pointed though than that of Dr. Claude Poher, as expressed in 1976 correspondence with the RAAF. Poher led France's first major official UFO research group GEPAN, part of the French equivalent to NASA. After the Australian Department of Defence sent him some of their Annual Summaries of UFO information, Dr. Poher wrote, "May I suggest, for transmission to personnel responsible for this work, that some of the 'possible causes' mentioned in these

summaries are not acceptable..." Dr. Poher gave an example of an innocuous observation at Wickham, NSW, on April 4, 1975, of a "silver object about the size of a cricket ball", which the 'summary' lists as Venus for the "possible cause". Poher concluded:

"...for the 4th April, 75, the planet was under the horizon so the cause Venus is ridiculous,

"There are many other impossibilities like this in the papers you sent me. I think one should avoid publication of these documents without a careful check by specialists of the different scientific disciplines involved, so as not to have, one day a journalist or a scientist holding the Services of the Australian Department of Defence up to ridicule."

The source of such "impossibilities" is the subject of some speculation. While unconfirmed, I was told the "inside story" by someone working in Defence. His account is controversial and at this stage difficult to substantiate, for obvious reasons. For the record here is his version based on my notes of a interview with him:

"While America had an official attitude -- the Condon Report etc. our Air Force simply has no expectations of getting any other verdict. Their attitude is to try to quieten everything down. Be bland as possible and hope that everything goes away. At times they were actually rather rude to witnesses, tending to ridicule where possible. Generally speaking the men that are handling it wish they weren't. But in the Air Force it is essential to look as though you're good at your job, to get promotion. The attitude is to look as though they are solving all the cases, while looking for an excuse to write it all off.

"The reason why in the 1960s a number of reports got out on sightings and explanations [the "Annual Summaries of Unusual Aerial Sightings (UAS)", which weren't quite "annual", the first being from 1960 to 1965, then eventually one covered 1960 to 1968, which became Summary No.1, Summary No. 2 covered 1969, No.3 covered 1970 and 1971, then Nos. 4 through to No. 9 appeared on an erratic annual basis covering individual years from 1972 to 1977 inclusively - B.C.] was that DAFI were handling it and not telling anybody and Public Relations (DPR) were the ones getting all the queries. DPR wrote to DAFI saying this is getting a bit sick. I don't know what to say. Give me an answer. DAFI said look we don't know. We haven't got any answers. We just can't tell. DPR said well hand me the files and I'll get the answers. He got the

files and then gave answers according to what the DPR man thought, i.e. ill-thought explanations without any recourse to the honesty of it. I had a look at the Venus group and it just so happened that none of the, say, 15 sightings attributed to Venus, there was not one occasion when Venus was above the horizon at the time. At one time a man in Tasmania saw a bright light in the sky and it was so bright he put on his sun glasses. That was written down as Venus!

"The Air Force published the lists ad nauseam for about ten years [i.e. from 1966 to 1978 covering 1960 through to 1977 inclusively - B.C.] and it was all this PR man who concocted everything and DAFI really had nothing to do with it.... So generally speaking I found the Air Force bordering on a sham really. They were not honest. Their purpose is to allay the fears of the public and to try to get everybody off their back. They don't want politicians on their backs. They don't want the public on their backs. They want to be left alone to do their other job."

Just how accurate is this "insider's" version of the evolution of the "Annual UAS Summaries". Part of his account is in accord with the facts as I could determine them with access to the files in 1982 to 1984. However the severity of his claim about the "honesty" of the exercise may possibly be reconciled by the point that if the PR man created the summaries, and we know certainly that DPR created the first one, then he may have done so, with recourse only to limited information from DAFI (i.e. DAFI gave DPR very brief summaries anyway.

There is some evidence for this as I saw small sheet summaries of individual sightings that were ostensibly used in the creation of the first summary) or he made only a very cursory reading of the actual files without any attempt at depth of analysis or critical evaluations of the suggested "possible causes". The RAAF Intelligence officers undertaking the original investigations often gave an "explanation" in Part 2 of the *Report on Unusual Aerial Sighting* pro-forma where it asked "41. The object reported probably was*/may have been *(delete as required)..... " Often this section was not filled out in reports but would have formed the basis of the DPR summary when the "possible causes" were available.

(Continued next issue)